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UNIVERSAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL FOR LIFE AND WORK

INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN SOCIAL INSTITUTE

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THE INTERNATIONAL STUDY CONFERENCE ON UNEMPLOYMENT

At its meeting in Chexbres 1930, the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work had decided to hold a Study Conference on Unemployment. This conference took place from April 25th-29th at the " Bischofshof " in Basle, kindly put at our disposal by the Church Council of Basle. Delegates came from the Churches of Germany, France, Great Britain, Holland, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States, including theologians as well as representatives of industry, and economists. Also the World's Committee of the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A., the Research Department of the International Missionary Council as well as the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches and the Herstel-Europe-Committee sent representatives as guests, the last-named organisation having already submitted to us the results of its former studies on international debts. The International Labour Office sent a representative, while a representative of the Section on Finance and Economics of the League of Nations was prevented at the last moment from coming. Prof. Slotemaker de Bruine, former minister of Labour of Holland presided, assisted by Rev. James Myers of New York and Prälat D. Dr. Schoell of Germany as Vice-Presidents; Pastor Gounelle of France, also an elected Vice-President, and some of the French experts, who had intended to participate, could not attend. A French expert, however, to whom the conference report had been submitted, agreed with it in principle, and underlined certain theses dealing with the problem of debts, which have been added to the final report of the conference.

In view of the special task of the Churches, the conference dealt with the main causes of the economic world crisis and its resulting unemployment, paying special attention to the fundamental changes in world economy and general indebtedness after the war (see also Nos 5 and 6 of the News Letter), and sought solutions for overcoming the economic world crisis and unemployment and to work out concrete proposals for common action by the Churches. The results of national study conferences, held in different countries, and the reports sent in by the Churches of Germany, Austria and Hungary, as well as the studies which the Research Department of the Geneva Institute had specially undertaken on behalf of the Churches, were valuable contributions. Owing to the political and economic developments prior to the conference, the results of those former conferences and studies could only be partially used. A special commission under the direction of the Swiss economist, Prof. Dr. Paul Keller, and later under the chairmanship of the Dutch delegate, Dr. Rosemond, dealt with the special character of the present economic crisis. Another commission, directed by the President of the conference, together with Prof. Graham of Princeton University, dealt with the

problems arising from international indebtedness. In view of the present economic situation of the world, the conference was forced to concentrate on the most immediate and urgent problems; the final report was worked out by the conference and passed on to the Geneva Institute with the request to submit it to the Presidents of the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work for joint action.

The Presidents of the Council agreed to the publication of the following report together with a declaration to the Lausanne Conference:

The Presidents of the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work submit to public opinion the findings of this conference in the following report for which the conference alone is responsible. They would also assure the statesmen of the nations assembled at Lausanne of the deep interest with which they will watch the proceedings of the Lausanne Conference, and of their sympathy, as well as of their earnest hopes and prayers that their deliberations may be crowned with success:

THE CHURCHES AND THE WORLD ECONOMIC CRISIS.

Report of the International Study Conference on Unemployment held at Basle, 25-29 April 1932.

The World Conference for Life and Work which met at Stockholm in 1925 defined the responsibility of the Christian Church for the distress associated with unemployment in the following terms: « The evils of unemployment are intolerable to the Christian conscience. Its causes must be investigated and removed. The Church is deeply interested in all efforts tending to combat the evils of unemployment and is in duty bound to direct the attention of Christian public opinion to the matter. » In these words the Churches implicitly express the conviction that unemployment attaches no stigma to those upon whom it falls. Though, in some instances, it may be due to personal shortcomings, or may be bound up with them, it is, in general, to be regarded as a grave personal misfortune and a stroke of evil fate.

Special Character of the Economic Crisis.

From the economic point of view unemployment is the symptom of continuous maladjustments in economic life, traceable to very different economic causes. In times of crisis it takes on the character of a general disaster. Such crises, more or less periodic, have been characteristic of modern economic life from the beginning of industrialism. They have, however, always been overcome, though not without sacrifices. The threatening peculiarity of the present crisis appears to lie in the fact that healing forces are lacking or at least not effective.

We think it can hardly be denied that the possibilities of economic expansion in the 19th century, for all the industrial countries at any rate, constituted one of the most effective factors in the persistent recovery from depressions. We feel that it is by no means obvious that this way out will always be open. Rather do we consider that the question as to whether the former possibilities of economic expansion which have existed so far have not come to an end, or, at any rate, are limited for the present and for the immediate future, is a very serious problem. This is a question to which history alone will be able to give a decisive answer.

We are not able to enter here into a discussion of a future fundamental change of the existing economic order. We should have to abandon every hope of a rapid alleviation of the present world economic situation, if this alleviation were solely dependant on the solution of the problem just referred to, even if its great significance is strongly felt by many people within the Churches. Neither can we make an attempt to enumerate all the forces operative in the present crisis but want to limit our task to point to a certain factor which seems to us of peculiar significance in our present economic order. We have in mind the apparent stagnation in a specially important part of the modern economic organisation, the free movement of prices, which enabled maladjustments in earlier crises to be overcome. This free movement of prices, however, has for some time past been subject to increasing and more or less far-reaching restrictions . We observe this phenomenon in all markets, in markets for goods, for labour, and last but not least, for money and credit. These restrictions do not work in isolated fashion but in their mutual relationships; they reinforce the evil consequences of one another.

In addition to the causes inherent in the structure of the modern economic system, extra-economic factors, mainly of a political character, are responsible for the existence of the above

mentioned restrictions upon the free movement of prices. The four years of war were not only responsible for an enormous destruction of goods, and therefore for the impoverishment of the world, which put a burden on industry which will be felt for years to come and which finds expression in the manifold and pressing forms of indebtedness which resulted therefrom. First and foremost, as a result of the war, the earlier world-wide economic cooperation has been shattered and its place has been taken by a tendency towards national economic isolation and self-sufficiency. The most obvious symptom of this change is the protectionist policy which, after the war, raised customs barriers to an extent unknown before, and which was carried to extremes as a result of the crisis.

World-Wide Economic Cooperation or Self-Sufficiency.

World-wide economic cooperation is essential to the preservation of the present machinery of production and to the present standard of living, a standard which has been made possible only by this machinery. Isolation and self-sufficiency lead of necessity to a fundamental change in the present world economic structure. For the industrial countries it would mean a return to a rural handicraft system and the relinquishment of a standard of living which is irrevocably linked to the modern system of large scale production.

The decision for one or other of the two possible economic alternatives above-mentioned, carries with it the greatest responsibility for the type of life which millions of people, whole nations, in fact, the whole of humanity, will lead. We are deeply conscious of the high value of simple forms of living and of the great dangers to the spiritual progress of man offered by conditions of life which have their roots in high material and technical development. But we feel obliged to point out that far-reaching disturbances of social and spiritual life would result if the standard of living of more classes of the population and of whole peoples should continue to fall and remain below the low level reached during the present crisis. The Churches cannot wish to see this happen; they rather desire that mankind should, by means of world cooperation, make that use of natural resources which best provides the material basis upon which a life of fellowship and brotherhood may reach its fullest development.

In view of the present situation without, however, being able to go into the question of a radical change of the economic order, we regard the removal of the obstacles which prevent a worldwide economic cooperation and a free exchange of economic forces and services, as of the utmost importance when dealing with unemployment and the distress resulting therefrom. This task is, for the moment, primarily one for politicians; they should strive to fulfil the desire of all nations for peaceful cooperation and should endeavour to meet their responsibility fully and impartially, particularly as they now possess a greater freedom of action than do leaders in the field of economics.

A New Regulation of World Indebtedness.

World indebtedness constitutes an urgent part of the problem of the economic crisis, and this indebtedness is a matter not only of interallied debts and reparation obligations but also of the internal debts incurred by several nations, in the prosecution of the war. Its significance may be realised by considering that a nation's losses in income and capital are many times as great as the amount of their intergovernmental obligations. This total indebtedness is of peculiar importance not only because it lays a specially heavy burden upon the future, and so far as this debt is concerned, no corresponding productive investment has been made, but also because it has its origin in the war and therefore is, by its very nature, a denial of world solidarity. The problem of international indebtedness, moreover, is not only a question of what can be economically borne but is also a political problem of primary importance since it poisons the international atmosphere and is thus, doubtless, one of the principal causes of the present crisis.

The peculiar difficulty in dealing with this internal and external indebtedness caused by the war lies in the fact that it is very largely State indebtedness. Governments are the guardians of law and order and therefore, in order to prevent economic and social troubles becoming more acute, they are obliged to carry out in the fullest good faith the obligations which they have contracted. Fundamental repudiation of their duty in this matter would give rise to proportionally far greater social and economic difficulties, than if a private enterprise cleared its economic position by bankruptcy. Here, the following question becomes of importance: would a strict adherence by governments to their engagements lead to new and greater disasters than we have yet suffered and is not some alleviation of the burden indispensable at the present time? The necessity for some such alleviation is, in view of the present distress, hardly open to question. An alleviation of the burden of debts is less likely to lead to evil consequences where inter-State relations are concerned than if the individual

states should destroy the confidence of their citizens by repudiation of their obligations to them. Nevertheless an alleviation also of the internal indebtedness is of very great importance and might be achieved by a voluntary conversion which would involve no violation of law or justice. The abolition of inter-State indebtedness, in particular, is the more desirable inasmuch as international obligations can, in the long run, be met only by the delivery of goods. This represents an economic disturbance both for the creditor and the debtor States and leads almost inevitably to protectionist measures, which in their turn further disturb world solidarity. The weight of this international indebtedness has been aggravated by a very considerable increase in the value of money which has had as a consequence a corresponding augmentation of the burden upon the debtor countries. For this reason alone, at least a reduction of intergovernmental debts would be thoroughly justifiable.

In this connection it is necessary to point to the fact that the immediate cause of the present financial crisis is to be found in the general recall of short term credits. In the light of its consequences this not only ran counter to common sense, inasmuch as it led to the collapse of currencies, but it was also incompatible with the principles of international solidarity. It is clear that a conversion of these short term debts into long term securities is necessary, particularly when the debts are of an international character.

Any reconstruction of international debt relationships presupposes confidence. The reestablishment of confidence, however, requires a consciousness on the part of politicians and financiers of the ulterior effects of financial measures on social and political tension between nations. A failure to take this matter into account is bound to lead to such an aggravation of social and political tension that a correction of defective financial measures will be forcibly effected. This will lead to evil consequences which might be avoided through a farsighted consideration of the social and economic situation. In this matter, also the abolition of intergovernmental indebtedness is of special importance.

An effective reduction of armaments is not only a necessary prerequisite to the restoration of confidence between nations but would also be an effective aid tending to better regulation of international indebtedness. Therefore new international agreements on indebtedness should be entered upon only on the assurance that, as a result thereof, the savings effected in governmental expenditure will not be nullified by an increase of expenditure upon armaments.

Any new regulation of intergovernmental indebtedness should proceed on the principle of the equal responsibility of both creditor and debtor countries, in order to prevent any new tension in international relations. The creditor countries must bear in mind the actual position of the debtor countries and act accordingly. The debtor countries, on the other hand must, without any reservation whatever, accept full responsibility for any remaining liabilities of whatever character.

In addition to every effort at a solution of the problem of unemployment through an improvement in international relations, it is equally necessary to make an immediate direct attack upon, and to alleviate, the distress arising therefrom. All effective attempts to provide employment, in cooperation with appropriate national and international organisations, should receive the support of the Churches. This applies especially to the efforts to provide all the unemployed young people with useful employment and so safeguard their physical, moral and spiritual well-being.

Future Organisation of Economic Life.

We see clearly that, in addition to these pressing questions, there are many other problems which affect the functioning of the economic order. Just as we urge world-wide economic cooperation so it seems to us that there should be, within each nation, similar cooperation between industry, individual enterprise, and all those in any way engaged in production. This cooperation should be inspired by the vision of the economic order as a living entity, and it is indispensable if industry is to fulfil its function in the service of mankind as completely as possible. Political and economic leaders must strive to keep the idea of the entity of the economic system always in the foreground and must embody it in economic legislation and the whole structure of industrial life. The lack of insight into the integral character of economic relationships, the failure especially in recent years, to take into consideration the interest of the whole as above that of individuals and separate groups, has led to grave errors and omissions which have brought about deplorable economic losses. Many paths, differing according to the nature of the economic life and situation of the various peoples, must be explored if reconstruction is to be achieved. The Churches will not oppose any measures, which do not violate the principles of morals, so long as they are appropriate to the end in view. This end can be thought of only in terms of the fullest service to humanity. Insofar as the education of public opinion, above all the stirring of the public conscience, is an indispensable prerequisite, the Church must be ready to assume the fullest responsibility.

The Appeal of the Churches.

We are conscious that the measures above outlined will bring results only after a considerable time and that they provide no immediately effective solution of the present distress from unemployment. We are conscious also that, even if we obtain the success we hope for, direct measures of a political character tending to alleviate the present difficulties, the world is facing a period of economic stress and strain. It seems to us to be a task of preeminent importance, to which all our powers must be directed, and not least the task of the Churches, so to direct educational and spiritual influence that the present distress may be borne above all by those groups of the population most deeply affected, and by every individual among them, without any spiritual collapse. Here too our deepest concern is for the care of suffering children and young people.

For many years past the Christian Churches have been engaged in combating the distress amongst the unemployed and amongst all who suffer from the evils of economic depression. The struggle has been growing day by day. The Churches trust that the fraternal love of their members and the will to make sacrifices will not be weakened by the evergrowing pressure of distress. The conduct of government and industry is, however, not in the hands of the Churches; they can but appeal to those who must, in practice, make the decisions. They would make this appeal as urgent and impressive as possible, particularly as, in the present situation, economic disintegration increases day by day and with it the suffering of untold millions of men. This suffering leads to despair and every day which is lost increases the danger of distress and despair resulting in complete chaos in one or other part of the world. Our appeal for decisive action must, therefore, not remain unheard. The judgment of God, the Lord of our lives, is over all. « Whosoever knoweth what is right and doeth it not, in him is the sin».

The report of the Basle conference has been sent officially by the Churches of the different countries to their respective governments, and distributed by the Institute to the delegates of the Lausanne Conference. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, as well as different leaders of the national delegations expressed their special interest in the report and its proposals. Through daily papers and reviews much comment has been made.

RELIEF WORK OF THE CHURCHES FOR THE UNEMPLOYED.

The next immediate task of the Churches, after taking a definite attitude to the great problems of the economic world crisis and unemployment, is its relief work for the unemployed. At the special request of the conference we try here to give a survey of such relief work. This survey is only the beginning of a series of further reports which we hope to publish later in combined form. The Institute would be most grateful for any kind of information about such relief work, which would help us in our exchange of experience.

Such relief work has taken most varied forms in the different Churches and parishes, for example the **provision of food**, clothing and coals, help to individuals and families, as well as organised efforts through the opening of homes, heated rooms and special dining-halls. The Institute is, however, willing to give information on the character and extent of such relief work (for the work of the Churches in the U.S.A. we recommend the very systematic survey: " How the Churches are helping in Unemployment "). In each case, however, the question of how through the cooperation of the unemployed themselves, for instance in dining-halls and work-shops, such service could be made more effective. Special attention should be paid to such methods of help which provide not only material, but also moral support and possibilities for recreation. For example, the holiday camps for wives and mothers of unemployed organised by the Churches of Paris.

Mention can be made also of the **organising of retreats, and study courses** of all kinds, which, according to age, sex and trade of the unemployed, take a different form. These courses, the underlying motive of which is the strengthening of moral forces and capacity for work, should give firstly a general education, secondly more development of special talents and abilities and lastly regular vocational training. Are markable example of helping the young unemployed has been given by the **Swedish** Church, the different parishes having collected funds to pay for the participation of young unemployed in courses in the Adult Schools. A similar campaign has been made possible during the last winter in **Holland** where the municipal authorities, free and Christian trade unions, youth organisations and Church bodies collaborated, and secured government support. (See |Fink: " Was können wir fur unsere arbeitslose Jugend tun ? " Berlin 1931; further information to be had through the Research Department).

A special service has been given by the Churches in their joint promotion of **settlements.** In Germany, for instance, an Evangelical Settlement Service has been organised, in which the Churches and the friends of the Churches all over Germany are being centralised, to give information on training for settlement work, the securing of settlement ground or of work in the founding of settlers' villages; however, not only practical advice is given but also moral support, which in times of a new vocational training, with material and moral difficulties, is so essential a factor. (See Schultz " Aufgaben evangelischer Arbeit in der ländlichen Siedlung ", Bielefeld 1930; which contains a bibliography).

Efforts have been made to secure for former industrial workers permanent work on **farms and agricultural occupations.** Schemes of this kind, promoted by the Churches, have proved successful, in spite of great difficulties, because together with the technical training general education on the new situation was given. (See Strathenwerth, " Die Sigmarshofer Umschulung jugendlicher Erwerbslosen von der Industrie zur Landwirtschaft Bielefeld 1931). To avoid a too short and therefore superficial training for agricultural labour a systematic and extensive training had been found necessary to enable the young industrial worker to become one day a settler.

However important such training for agricultural work may be, it can only slightly affect the high figures of unemployed industrial workers. For instance, in Germany, during the period 1919-1929 31.736 new settlements of 190.000 acres and 67.205 allotments of 205.000 acres have been created, whereas there are at present 5-6 million unemployed. For these settlements the sons of farmers, without a farm of their own, have had priority over industrial labourers.

Special service, rendered by the Quakers in the coal districts of **South Wales**, has improved the standard of living of the almost permanently unemployed population, by a most extensive plan of creating thousands of new settlements. Further development of this plan was made possible through a special subvention of the British Government, while leaving the right of decision regarding plans in a large measure to the Quakers. Last year, for instance, 64.000 unemployed in these coal districts have produced food amounting to 400.000 with an outlay of £23.000.

In view of the very great limitations of these different efforts, the **voluntary work-service** has during the last year gained ground in Germany in spite of great opposition. But lack of funds prevents further extension. It is limited to such occupations which cannot be undertaken by private efforts and which are of a public character. Those who participate in it do not ask for the legal wages, but for the actual cost of living. The necessary funds come mostly from the unemployment insurance company. Because of the pedagogical importance of this voluntary work-service Church organisations and parishes should take a special interest in collaborating and helping its work, or should themselves take the initiative. During the winter 1931/32 there were in Germany 33.000 unemployed engaged in voluntary work-service (a detailed report was published in the " Reichsarbeitsblatt 10/1932). Special attention should be given to the plan, whereby work is done for unemployed by unemployed which leads partly to an economic system based on exchange of products; more detailed information about this will be given in the next number of the " News Letter ".

Whenever possible the best kind of relief work consists, however, on securing work for the different groups of unemployed, especially for the younger ones. Church authorities of the different Churches and countries have tried already for some time to support the work done by the official labour exchanges. The Evangelical Youth and Welfare Organisations have tried to secure work for the unemployed, or for young and often unskilled workers, who because of their youth need protection or for older unemployed who because of their advanced age are less apt to adapt themselves to new working conditions, and who have therefore no prospects for getting jobs. Thus in 1930 it was possible to secure through joint efforts with the Home Missions 60.000 work places in Germany, of these 15-18.000 were occupations for young employees on farms.

In **France** the Churches are trying to build up a special appointment service. Through the close collaboration of the clergy and the different parishes it has been possible to get a systematic survey of available posts and work. This collaboration has in many cases already shown good results and is supported by some of the Protestant newspapers and magazines as these have put their advertisement pages at the disposal of the appointment offices. Also **the United States**, where no official appointment offices exist, the Churches are promoting such a service in an extensive way, making it possible in several of the big cities to secure for many unemployed permanent or temporary jobs by inquiring systematically at the different firms. In the next number of the " News Letter " a fuller report on this relief work will be given. The report of the Basle Conference pointed out that even in the case of a solution of the political problems, the world would still have to face a time of hard economic struggle and of serious privation. It becomes therefore more urgent for the Churches to undertake the brotherly service of relief work. This service must be organised on a large scale, from district to district and from the town to the country; and has even been organised internationally, for instance, through special help from Switzerland and France to German unemployed.

Following the Basle Conference, the Advisory Research Committee had a discussion on the **theological problems of Research Work.** The Rev. V. A. Demant, Director of Research of the Christian Social Council of English Churches gave an address on the problem of Christian Sociology in England, published under the title " Our present Problems in Christian Sociology " in " Christendom ", Quarterly Journal of Christian Sociology, Oxford June 1932. Blackwell. Prof. A. Runestam, Uppsala spoke of the discussion which had taken place in the nordic countries on the Lutheran justification of Christian social ethics.

Professor Dibelius of Heidelberg spoke on the actions of God in history as decisive bases of Christian social ethics. It was planned to deal in regular study conferences with the fundamental problem of Christian social ethics. The first of these theological discussions on " The different Conceptions of a Christian Sociology in the History of the Church ", will take place at the time of the meeting of the Universal Christian Council. A further study conference on the social problem is being planned for next spring.

Jointly, with the Research Department of the International Missionary Council, the World's Y.W.C.A. and the World's Committee of Y.M.C.A., the Research Department of the Institute submitted to the International Labour Organisation some requests and proposals on the international regulation of **non-industrial child labour,** a problem dealt with by the XVIth International Labour Conference in April 1932. They expressed their satisfaction that some of the questions in the draft convention had been considered in accordance with their former suggestions and stressed the sincere desire that these suggestions should be accepted. The main objects were the establishment of the age of admission at fourteen, guarantees for prohibition of child labour on Sundays and official holidays as well as night labour. Attention is drawn to the whole relation between the school age and the age of admission to non-industrial child labour, and the desire expressed that the problem of the school age should be studied internationally. Further, the suggestion was made to regard the following occupations for children as dangerous: work in public houses, restaurants, bars, etc. and likewise to prohibit employment of children by people who had been convicted previously or who were known to be habitual drunkards. The organisations also consider it necessary that special institutions should be founded which would take care of the children where their families cannot do this; they are ready to support all efforts in this direction in the different countries. Finally, those countries, which had not yet done so, were asked to ratify as soon as possible the former conventions on child-labour, and here again the organisations declare their readiness to support to their utmost the effective carrying out of the conventions on child labour.

Also a joint declaration was submitted to the International Labour Conference with regard to the abolition of **fee-charging employment agencies.** All efforts made to protect the workman from exploitation on the part of the agencies are welcome. At the same time, however, the desire was expressed that the official questionnaire to be sent to the governments, should also include the question whether charitable employment agencies were necessary and important, the latter being a real asset to the official appointment offices and asking only for a very small sum—mostly only from the employers—in order to maintain their offices. The organisations express their willingness to study together with their local and national organisations all questions herein involved and to collaborate in the preparation of the decisions which have to be taken at the International Labour Conference in 1933.

Announcements.

The Council Meeting.

The Executive Committee and the Council will meet at the Beau Séjour Geneva. The Executive on the 9th and 10th of August, the Council on the 11th-14th, and the European Continental Section holds a meeting on August the 8th.

A Youth Study Week.

A Youth Study Week, jointly arranged by the Youth Commissions of the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, and the Universal Council, of about 50 delegates from various countries will meet at Gland from August 24th-31st to discuss the subject of the economic and international crisis. The Chairman will be the Bishop of Ripon. The speakers include Youth leaders, clergy and laymen, and experts from the International Labour Office.

The cost of stay at the Fellowship School, Gland, which has its own bathing beach and spacious grounds, will be 30 francs. The Youth Commission of our Council can offer 20 francs towards the sum to a limited number of representatives. Registration from any young Church man or woman will be welcomed if received before August 10th.

Publications.

1 NEWS LETTER, quarterly in English, French and German, of the activities of the Council and Institute (gratis)

2. MEMORIAL PAMPHLET TO THE LATE ARCHBISHOP OF UPSALA. Limited edition. (gratis).

3. THE CHURCHES AND THE WELFARE OF SEAMEN. Studies and Documents, English series No. 3. (gratis).

4. THE CHURCHES AND PRESENT-DAY ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. Studies and Documents. English series No. 4 Price 6*d*. or 20 cents a copy. I.C.F. Book Shop,4, The Sanctuary, London S.W.1.; or the Social Institute, 2, Rue de Montchoisy, Geneva.

5. REPORT OF THE STUDY CONFERENCE, entitled: The Churches and the World Economic Crisis, 50 copies 1 shilling, or 1 d. each.